The Culture of Youths

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Al-Balagh Foundation

Youth Forum

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In the name of Allah

What is Culture, and Who is a Cultured man?

At times, we use the word `culture', and say: This man is a cultured man, and this is an Islamic culture. Thus, what do we mean by culture and cultured man?

Surely, what we mean by culture is, a collection of human knowledge which man acquires and has an influence on his thoughts, understanding, habits, morals and his relationship with Allah, the society and life. For example, ideological knowledge, history, jurisprudence, literature, law, politics, morals, psychology, economics, sociology, etc.

And cultured man, is a man who acquires some portion of those sciences and other human knowledge, and becomes influenced from it.

Man is in need of understanding social and political life, as well as knowing history, jurisprudence, ideology, law, etc. in order to live a peaceful and sound life in the society, and to be able to draw a better line for his life, and to succeed in his relationship with others. Therefore, culture is knowledge and attitudes, or it is a knowledge that purifies man's

behaviour. Because an ignorant person cannot understand matters and stances properly.

For example: We are in need of knowledge, in order to know the political atmosphere in our country, or its political system, or the manifesto of a particular political party, or of a presidential candidate or member of the house of assembly. Or the role of woman socially, or the issue of woman's hijab, or the removal of the veil, or the issue of human rights or an issue concerning Islamic sects or ideological thought.

Indeed, understanding these issues and defining our stance in relation to it, needs knowledge and awareness.

A cultured man is he who possesses knowledge and understanding, which may enable him to understand matters, as well as, defining a sound stance toward it, or through following different topics and subjects by studying and understanding them.

And when man lacks culture and knowledge, no doubt he cannot define a sound stance, rather he will be an imitator of others, and this is dangerous to his personality and stance. Many a times, an uncultured and illiterate person tends to choose a wrong stance toward a particular issue, thereby making himself a blind imitator, but later regrets after discovering his mistake.

And a cultured man is a civilized man. He knows the meaning of humanity and respects

it. And he is a man with a balanced personality, he deals with things with awareness and consciousness.

A cultured man is he whose knowledge and culture has an effect on his behaviour and personality, thereby, his culture is physically seen in his speech with others and, likewise, in his dealings with others while living with them.

Culture emerges in man's personality, in his words, dressing, his appearance and his system of life.

A cultured man, is a man of straight behaviour, who chooses his actions, behaviour and speeches.

For instance, a cultured man is he who defines his political stances as a result of his knowledge on political matters, defines his relationship with others according to a matured social way, far from harming others or mistreating with them.

And a cultured man, is he whose personality becomes respected and balanced by culture, and is adorned with good behaviour and manners.

And a cultured man, is he who learns the basis of a successful social relation with others.

And likewise, a cultured man, is he who respects people's opinions and views, as well as, dealing with them respectively.

Cultural Identity

Culture differs from one ideology to another, from one people to another, and from time to time.

The European capitalist material culture differs with the Marxist culture, and these two cultures differ with Islamic culture etc.

Cultural Identity means: Type of culture, for example, Islamic culture has its own particular identity, i.e. its particular type of culture. It is a culture based on the belief in Allah, revelation, prophethood, the day of judgement, etc.

And material culture, is a culture based on the basis of infidelity and disbelief in the existence of Allah, religion and moral values.

So a cultured Muslim, is he who is well versed on the basis of Islamic thought, thereby the effect of his culture is seen in his behaviour, his writings, if he is a writer, and in his speeches.

And a cultured Muslim, is he who is well versed in Islamic knowledge, from the Holy Qur'an, pure Prophetic traditions and the history of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), history, jurisprudence, ideology and Islamic thought. Thereby he becomes acquainted with human knowledge and social life according to Islamic teachings. For example, he understands

freedom, politics, morals, man and woman's relationships with each other, social manners etc., based on Islamic teachings. And, likewise, he understands matters, he thinks islamically and weights it in accordance with the scale of what is lawful '*halal*' and what is unlawful '*haram*', belief in Allah and its correspondence with a sound intellect.

Protecting the Islamic Identity

It is the duty of the learned religious Muslim scholars, intellectuals, experts and journalist to protect the Islamic identity through their various fields, as it is also the duty of the government, universities and institutions to protect this identity.

Indeed, Muslim intellectuals, scholars and experts have produced different books, newspapers, magazines and radio and television programs, etc., in order to produce Islamic culture. In view of this, they wrote (books) in relation to Islamic ideology, freedom, human rights, woman in Islam, philosophy of worship, Qur'anic and hadith knowledge, Islamic system of politics, social relations, Islamic educational and economical system. As they also wrote on jurisprudence, prophetic history, morals, drama, poems, Islamic history etc.

They also engaged themselves in defending on Islamic thought, as well as, answering the questions and doubts of the enemies of Islam.

Basis of Islamic Culture

In order to be acquainted with Islamic culture, it is necessary for you to know the basis of Islamic culture through the major Islamic books, studies and Islamic programs.

The method which acquirs the basis of Islamic culture, for a Muslin beginner, can be summarized as follows:

1- The basis of Islamic culture is the Islamic ideology; and there are various books which deal with this subject.

Therefore, in order to equip yourself with the basis of Islamic culture, you must read Islamic ideological books, or listen to lessons on the subjects on a recorded cassettes, or attend lessons on the subject.

Whoever possesses the knowledge of the principles of ideology based on certainty and scientific proof, the ideology will be planted in himself first; as a result, he will be able to answer the doubts put forward against Islamic ideology, secondly.

Thirdly, he will be well acquainted with Islamic ideology, like monotheism, Divine Justice, predetermination and Divine decree pophethood, miracle and revelation, resurrection, reward and punishment, leadership

'Imamate', etc. And in order to receive a sound ideological knowledge, a reader must choose an authentic ideological book, which is free from deviated thoughts and mistakes, and he must take the Holy Qur'an as his scale in weighting those books.

Imam Ja'far bn Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s.) encourages us to take our ideology from the Holy Qur'an. He is reported to have said:

"Do not pass what is in the Holy Qur'an, for you will go astray after being on the right path".

2- Jurisprudential Culture: The science and knowledge of Jurisprudence *'figh'* supplies us with the knowledge of Islamic laws and regulations in all our life's endeavours, like the family laws, government, wealth, land, business transactions, worships, food...etc, most especially the obligations obligatory for us to do or not to do them.

Thus, in order to equip yourself with jurisprudential knowledge, you must read books concerning Islamic jurisprudence, and study it and learn its laws.

But we ought to know that the meaning jurisprudence *'fiqh'* has not only confined itself to knowing Islamic jurisprudential laws, rather it means consciousness and understanding of ideology, system, concepts and laws, as well as, the power of extraction *'istinbat'*.

3- In order to improve and widen your Islamic culture, and to acquire the basis of Islamic culture, you need to read books on the principles of jurisprudence '*Usul al-Fiqh*', another on the sciences of the Qur'an '*Ulum al-Qur'an*' and thirdly on the sicences of Hadith '*Ulum al-Hadith*'.

Because studying these books will give you essential knowledge, even if it is primitive, of the most important basis of Islamic culture regarding *'Ijtihad' (endeovouring to discuss and deduce the Islamic laws and regulations for their course)* and how to extract Islamic laws from its source, as well as, the science of Qur'an and Hadith.

4- Your Islamic culture will never be completed unless you are acquainted with the history of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), studying his honourable life and personality, as well as, the history of great personalities of Islam, the Prophet's Household '*Ahlul-Bait*' (a.s.) in the beginning. These studies will give you the most rich Islamic culture in your life; either in the field of morals, or in the field of laws and system of life, or in understanding the Islamic laws. As it will provide you with the greatest lesson and examples, and outlines Islam in its practical meaning. There are diverse books that deal

with the prophetic history; you can choose one of them.

But you have to avoid books that contain superstitions and wrong information on the history of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and his Holy Family (a.s.).

5- Moral: Morals and ethical culture forms a basic root in the Islamic cultural roots. Islamic scholars and intellectuals have written many books on morals and good manners, therefore, in order to be acquainted with cultural ethics, you must study books on the science of ethics, so as to be well versed with Islamic morals through the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic *Sunnah*.

6- Islamic History: History is man's teacher and milestone, it contains exhortation, experiences and lessons, which man is in need of. It is a rich source of knowledge and culture.

History tells us about our nation, people and their great culture, knowledge and their stance viz-a-viz other communities. As well as what our forefathers did in relation to conquering towns, liberating their communities, fighting oppression, corruption, imperialism and the path of the oppressors as it also gives us more light on the generation before us.

Thus, studying history and its knowledge gives us a wide culture, but this requires authentic history books.

7- Language and Leterature: Arabic language is the language of Islam, the language of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Hadiths, it is the language of all Islamic knowledge and understanding, for instance; jurisprudence, ideology, the principles of jurisprudend '*Usul al-Fiqh*', the sciences of Hadith, philosophy, morals…etc.

Arabic grammar '*nahw*' is regarded as the most important science of the Arabic language to a cultured man, because studying '*nahw*' and '*sarf*' is a compulsory issue for a sound and good pronounciation and understanding of Arabic language.

Whoever lacks the knowledge of '*nahw*', his mistakes in Arabic pronounciation and understanding will be apparent, and this is a defect in his culture, which ought to be corrected. In addition to the fact that making mistakes in pronouncing an Arabic word changes its meaning many at times.

A person who cannot express well, or makes mistakes in his language, gives room for others to know his cultural weakness. Therefore, he ought to know the meanings of Arabic words, the laws governing its grammar and '*Sarf*', their ways of speech, and this is

through reading, studying and listening to programs produced for this purpose, or through reading summarized books on '*nahw*'.

8- Islamic Thought: Among the major Islamic cultural knowledge is the Islamic political, social, and economical thought, etc.

Therefore, for acquiring the basis of this topic, you must read books written by Islamic scholars and intellectuals on Islamic culture in the field of economics, system of governance in Islam, social system, family and educational system in Islam, freedom and human rights in Islam…etc.

Indeed, reading those books, and following radio and television programs in regard to Islamic culture and thought, will no doubt provide you with the basis of Islamic culture and knowledge. And it will open a way of understanding Islamic knowledge and culture, which will safeguard your thought and intellect from deviation.

Thus, you must first of all revive your Islamic culture, before you turn into studying other books that deal with non-Islamic culture, so as to build your own Islamic culture from a sound source.

But a young Muslim who starts to acquire non-Islamic culture, and grows his culture from a non-Islamic source, no doubt will live in a condition of uncertainty and lack of understanding Islamic thought.

Culture and Civl Development

Man's culture and thought is influenced by the means of civil life which he uses for production and performing services.

As he is also influenced by scientific and industrial development reached by man through the means of communication like radio, television, computer, video, and cinema. Likewise, other industrial developments like, agriculture and printing tools, treatment's equipment, and other industries that produce what man needs for his daily life, and his way of living in a big town, and the way in which towns and markets are designed etc...

These equipments and industries have completely changed man's way of life in the society. It contributes in human's growth and their ways of thinking and it has negative effects in the social life of people, as it has its positive effects in man's progress and comfort.

Industrial development and a successful life derived from it, affects the social relations between people, because the present relations between people and families are not the same as before. Presently, we can find people staying in one place for many years, but

without any good and cordial relationship between them.

Before this time, families and neighbours exchanged visits, and they spent many hours discussing, but after the introduction of television into houses, the visits which existed before decreased. They spent their time watching television. And before this period of material difficulties, people had time for social relations, visiting friends and relations, but after facing such difficulties and problems, this good relation decreased, and man lost that social spirit.

For us to be victorious over this negative approach to life, we must increase and expand our relations with friends, relatives, and neighbours through creating humanitarian organizations in our area, attending congregational prayers in mosques, visiting friends and relations in our holidays and at the time of festivals. And also exchanging greetings through letters and telephones calls, as well as, arranging times for social relations, because it is compulsory.

However, a cultured man is a social man, and he knows how to live with the society, and act positively with others.

It is because of the importance of social relations between people, that the principles of

Islamic religion encouraged the expansion and development of such relationship between people. Allah, the Most High, said:

"O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you." *Holy Qur'an (49: 13)*

Cultural Imitation

People, in their way of receiving culture and principles of civilization, are divided into two, and, likewise, in their way of thinking, behaviour, mode of dress, eating and living, and the way of social relations.

First, receiving it through understanding, consciousness and conviction, he knows why he accepts such opinion and view and why he refuses the other. He knows why he is doing a particular action and why he gives it up.

And the other is an imitator, due to the lack of understanding and consciousness, he only follows what reaches him through mass media and other means. He receives things not through consciousness or understanding, and this type of man is a man with weak a personality. He lacks will power and stance. This type of man can never be called a cultured and civilized man, even if he calls himself a cultured and civilized person.

Many people watch the screen on a television, or what is written in magazines and newspapers, or shown in films, or seeing others doing it, then they are influenced by it.

Indeed, the problems facing most people in our Islamic countries is the blind imitation of the western culture.

Some imitate the western culture in the field of family life, freedom, sexual urges, women, social life, morals and ethics. He received it through imitation and without any disscussion and investigation, or without looking to the shortcomings of its practice in the western society.

While others receive some wrong opinion concerning Islam, and continue to believe in such deviated ideas and even defend it, rather than striving towards getting rid of it or changing it.

A cultured man builds his conviction and chooses his stance toward things, personalities and opinions through understanding, consciousness and knowledge. He can never accept something unless he is confident of the person that narrates it, as well as, after a thorough understanding.

Morality of a Cultured Man

Among the disease affecting man is the diseases of morality, like pride, arrogance, self-conceit, cheating, selfishness, bad relation with others…etc.

Therefore, the most famous features of a cultured man is getting rid of such bad features and moral diseases.

Maybe among the famous moral diseases affecting some civilized and cultured personalities is narcissism and reclusion and having superiority over others. Some people feels that they are above others, thus, they don't deserve his respect. So he lives with them with arrogancy and transcendence.

This kind of disease portrays a weakness in that person's culture and civilization, as well as, the feeling of weakness in his inner being. And no doubt this will reduce his respect in the face of the society and it may turn him into Allah's wrath and punishment.

A cultured person who understands the meaning of culture and knowledge, must make morality as an important element of his culture. Any person whose moral personality is incomplete, is not a complete cultured person, rather we cannot call him a cultured

man with its real meaning. This is because man's personality depends on his morals, and it is the source of his knowledge and perfection. While outlining this reality, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) is reported to have said:

"I was sent so as to complete good morals."

And "The most perfect faith among the believers is the one whose morals are best."

A cultured man is he who respects others, who knows the value of his culture, and deals with people according to the capacity of their culture and thought. If he knows some culture, but he ignores many things, and as others are ignorant of some of his culture and knowledge, he also is ignorant of others culture and knowledge. This is a reality, which everyone will understand, and this is a source of man's humility. Allah, the Most High, says:

"We raise in degree whom We please. And above every one possessed of knowledge is he All-Knowing One." *Holy Qur'an (12: 76)*

Work Schedule

For you to become a cultured man, you must build culture in yourself.

And for you to build a culture for yourself, you must arrange a method of getting it for yourself.

There are different ways and means of attaining culture, including books, magazines, newspapers, radio, television, lectures, conferences, video and audio cassettes, internet…etc.

You must utilize your time in order to get such cultures in accordance with your work and your responsibilities.

You should try and use the following teachings in order to acquire culture and civilization:

When you wake up in the morning, try and read some verses of the Holy Qur'an and, likewise, before sleeping, try to memorize a verse everyday, and try to memorize at least two hadiths every week.

Try and spare a time for reading books on culture or civilization every day. Read newspapers every day, listen to news and political analysis, as well as, radio and television programs on culture.

Try to arrange an extra lesson with your friends every week or twice in a month, so as to read a book on culture and later discuss on its contents.

Participate in cultural sessions and courses.

Put a jurisprudence book on your table, read an issue (verdict) everyday and understand its meaning.

Take with you a book or a magazine while travelling and read it while waiting in the station or inside the car or train or plane.

While resting in the afternoon, read your book or magazine, and read newspapers before sleeping.

Spare a notebook for writing general data which you may need later, or when you hear it from the radio or television. Write the source of the data, number of the page and the date you got it.

Our Stance with Regard to Other's Culture

Our present world differs by means of culture and knowledge, as well as, accumulation of cultural production.

Some of these means include, books, magazines, newspapers, radio, television, internet, video, fax and other means of communication. All these equipments give a large covering of cultural activities to man without delay, and without anything to block it, as it was in the olden days.

This developed means of communication, carries and transfers different kinds of culture and thought to us.

Some of them provide us with good and sound culture, which contributes in our guidance as well as strengthening our relationship with the Almighty Allah, reforming our society and our personality, and struggling against corruption, crimes and bad conducts.

Others act towards spread infidelity and moral disorder, taking man away from his Lord. They encourage deviation, separating our personalities and culture from our civilization, ideology and Islamic history, as well as, propagating deviation and mythes in

the name of Islam, thereby damaging the image of Islamic culture and thought.

Many of these books, articles and thoughts are meant to damage our Islamic thought and create doubt in our minds concerning Islamic thought, which removes man from darkness to light, or tries to portray Islam as a religion of backwardness.

Everyday we are faced with different kinds of culture; we must not accept them all.

Because we are blessed with cultural basis which we can use in weight anything that comes to us. We should measure the soundness of any culture with Islamic ideology and laws and what was accepted by a sound mind what ever corresponded with these principles, then it is a sound culture we should accept. And we should expel whatever is contrary to it.

Therefore, we should deal with others culture with care, i.e, we should accept what corresponds with our Islamic principles, and refuse what contradicts them.

Our Stance Viz a Viz Others Opinions:

Indeed, we live in a vast human society in which different political, sectional, philosophical, and social opinions are increased

The people at our surrounding are of different Islamic sects different political and cultural opinions, as well as, different religions.

And indeed, dealing with these different ideology and opinions and those people, must be based on dialogue and understanding. And the right way will be deducted through knowledge and thought.

However, we must know others opinions so long as we want to build our stance from it. It is not right to outline our stance on any person unless we know his view and opinion, as well as, examine it closely and scientifically.

It is wrong for Muslims to turn their difference in opinion among the individuals of an Islamic society into enimity, conflict, and boycott. We as Muslims, should believe in the freedom of speech give by Islam, and also accept criticism and open the way for others to express their opinion. And we should put a scientific dialogue, a main source of outlining what is right and what is wrong.

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